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Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation

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BIBLE STUDIES
on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation

"Bible Study is always a kind of experiment to a learning process." Thus Wille Riekkinen leads us into an interesting reflection on what we are about to be engaging ourselves in.

This new issue of resource material on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation contains basically bibilical reflections and bible study materials helping us to ground in the holy scriptures the basic issues related to JPIC.

You will find here three basic kinds of proposals: The first are substantial biblical reflections on JPIC by Dr. Levi Oracion from the Philippines and Dr. Basil Manning from Botswana. Both try to understand from their cultural and theological perspective the meaning of this process for the Christians in today's world.

The second emphasis is on a series of "guides" for bible study groups in which participants are invited to share their own understanding in the light of the bible texts. These are also called "outlines" for bible study leaders and enablers.

Thirdly bible studies concentrating on specific texts that could serve as starting points for reflection and discussion on today's issues. The examples here are 5.9, where Dr. Milton Schwantes from Brazil guides us through Isaiah Chapter 2, and 5.11, where Giorgio Nebbia from Italy helps us to understand our responsibility vis-à-vis our neighbours who will be living in the next century.

Finally a lectionary of daily biblical texts on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation, included to guide readers into the scriptures.

I hope that by using this material you will continue involving people in the mutual process of commitment to JPIC. We would like to hear from you, of your experiences and concerns with regard to Justice, Peace and the Integrity of creation .

Yours in Christ

Carlos Sintado
Executive Secretary
for Development Education

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JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

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BIBLE STUDY AS LEARNING PROCESS

Bible study is always a kind of experiment, a learning process. It is a way of finding out how biblical texts speak to us today and of recognizing the symbols that carry the message. In ecumenical learning we can do this best in community with our fellow believers and also, if possible, with people of other faiths and even of none faith.

Nowadays we cannot expect to convince our partners in dialogue simply by saying: "It is written in the Bible". The message of the Bible must "become flesh" before it can be effective. That is why the meaning of the texts has first to be clarified; after that, we can reflect on their relevance for today. The message itself must prove its own importance and truth, therefore it is important to listen to what God is really saying to us and to our neighbours through the biblical texts we are studying.

I shall try to describe some useful aspects of approaches we can experiment with when we engage in Bible study. But first of all let us reflect on the unique resource "library" which we call "the Bible" or "the Holy Scriptures".

The Bible consists of 66 volumes which gather up oral and written traditions from more than a thousand years. The oldest traditions were transmitted orally from generation to generation, by reciting them with the accompaniment of music and movement. After hundreds of years they were then written down, edited, published and enriched with new writings. This literature was used for very different purposes, e.g. for festivals in temples, synagogues and early Christian churches, for instruction in faith, and for remembrance of God's great deeds. It could also be used to defend or to proclaim the faith, for pastoral consolation or correction in a crisis of faith, for counselling those in positions of power, and for giving hope to the hopeless. Accordingly, one finds many different literary types and styles. For example, there are liturgies, poems, stories, genealogies, codes of law, proverbs, letters, satires, words of wisdom, meditations and visions. The methods of communication are equally varied: we can find recitation, writing, symbolism, historical accounts, intellectual reasoning, prophetic deeds. This richness of biblical material is not to be neglected! In attempting to relate the Bible to the social, political and cultural issues of today we should take account of it.

Let us now look at three different approaches we should consider when embarking on a Bible study experiment: a historical literary, a theological meditative and an existential approach.

Historical literary approach

We should remember that in each biblical passage individual members of the people of God have put down in writing their own witness to what God taught them and their community. In the Bible we can hear the voices of a personal (or national) "I-Thou" relationship to God. So our first step in interpretation is to try to find out what the writers were really saying in the situation in which they lived, in the period from about 1000 B.C. to 140 A.D. This will help us when we come to examine what God wants to tell us today through these same scriptures.

The historical literary approach does not necessarily require academic training. It can proceed by asking a few very simple questions:

a) who speaks, when, where and to whom? The answers to these questions will help us to understand the structure and context of the text being studied. To illustrate the text's political, cultural and religious circumstances we need to have knowledge of the Bible, and sources of information about the whole historical context of the ancient Near East. Modern commentaries and other tools for Bible study (concordances, biblical theological word-books, and books on archaeology, history and everyday life in biblical times) can give us the necessary background and "feeling" to understand the text.

b) What is the literary type of the passage? Is it a report, a parable, an allegory, a prayer, a hymn, a confession, a satire, a dialogue? Is the author of the book using his favorite terms and images? Is he using symbols? These questions are important because we may misunderstand the text, for example by trying to explain a parable as if it were a report, or a satiric story as if it were a historical event.

c) The questions outlined above will help us to formulate the particular message the original author(s) wanted to communicate to the hearers and/or readers of that time. Is there something new in the message? What is the writer's purpose?

The purpose of questions a, b and c is to separate the encumbrances of historical circumstances from the essential message, and to recognize the impact the message would have made in its original situation. When we have done so, we can think how best to communicate the message in our own situation today. We have to find and use modern cultural symbols and modern methods. Simply to produce devotions is not enough if we want to let the Bible influence the world today. How can we set about our task? After the historical literary approach we have to make use of the theological-meditative approach and the existential approach.

Theological-meditative approach

The questions set above lead us on to the next step which is to reflect on the chosen text theologically. We are expecting God to speak to us through the text. In meditation, we shall try to go beyond our literary and historical study and to reach a theological understanding of the text. To do this, the following aspects should be noted:

Biblical texts are expressions of faith based on various theological views developed through the ages. It is important to ask which tradition the studied text belongs to, and which early or later applications of faith are reaffirmed, reinterpreted, or perhaps contested in the text. To arrive at an answer, we must turn once again to the historical understanding of the Bible. In Bible study groups, this information can be given by a suitable resource person (usually the leader of the group). He/she can help the group to think about the content of the faith being expressed in the text. What does the passage say about God - human beings - nature?

Many biblical texts are actually prayers. Is this true of the present text? Does it have any sacramental significance? Can the message of the text be expressed through contemporary parables, symbols, art forms, body language, mime, drama? If so, why not use them?!

As we follow these steps we are trying to find out what God wants to teach us through the experiment of Bible study. If we are to succeed, we should recognize the importance of sharing our findings and learning from each other.

Existential approach

In our meditative approach we already took a step towards the existential approach, which means that we try to apply the message to ourselves in the concrete realities of contemporary society. We discover how we are challenged to respond, and what our responsibilities are. Our context may be totally different from the original life situation of the examined passage. Of course it may be that the text has an immediate relevance to us, and no specific Bible study is necessary; we simply agree with the message of the text. But sometimes it does not "speak" to us. Or sometimes we may remember other texts in the Bible, which say just the opposite (e.g. Rom. 13:1-7 compared with Rev. 13 and Acts 5:29). Then we have to try to find a new direction through self-examination and the encounter of the text with our present life situation. This means we recognize the challenges, promises, consolation, demands, fears and sin, that the text conveys to us. But this is no more than a half-way stage; we have to go on to examine what kind of repentance ("metanoia") is needed in our life today. Who needs it, why and how? To answer these questions, it is good to learn to read the texts of the Bible through the eyes of the oppressed - and the oppressors. We can then understand the different possible interpretations and learn to ask the will of God for us today.

* * *

An existential approach alone is always a risk, because we have no control over how our message will be heard. Therefore in every Bible study experiment we must try to take account of all three approaches just outlined. Knowledge, spiritual understanding, experience and feelings belong together. Then comes the important sharing of our findings and learning together. However, in order to achieve these goals, it is vital that the biblical text be properly understood; without this understanding we are not listening in fact to what the Bible says.

* * *

Techniques for understanding

The leader of the Bible study group should realize that many participants often have only the vaguest picture of a passage after a first reading. One of the most important steps, even goals, of a Bible study is to ensure that the text is clearly understood. One reading is seldom enough, we need to use our imagination to make journey through space and time to enable us to "participate" in the "event" described in the text. In Bible study groups we sometimes need to use the same kind of identification techniques as we employ when we read novels and watch movies. That is, we must try to feel ourselves to be actually part of the scene being portrayed. This effort can still be intensified through, for example, role-plays, drama, movement, mime, etc. These can form part of the Bible reading as well as of the meditation. Of course this is not suitable for every biblical text, but it is excellent for dialogues and for some of the more dramatic passages of scripture.

Many-roles approach helps us to adapt historical facts and exegetical knowledge (historical approach), to use spiritual reflection (meditative approach) and to participate existentially in biblical events and stories. We will be more able to analyse the situation, understand the behavior of the people involved, and react to the message. The role-players themselves find it an effective experience which makes the story a lasting influence on their lives and thought.

Another useful role-play technique is based on the principles of modern psycho-drama, and is called "living statues". Biblical stories are illustrated and meditated on with the help of imaginary scenes created by a "sculptor" who is a member of the Bible study group. He or she positions volunteer members of the group in the arrangement described in the biblical story. Through these "slides" (3-4 "minutes" of the story) the biblical passage can be made real, and the interplay of characters in the story can be underlined. Historical information about the text is needed, and at the same time the "feelings" of the persons involved (in the Bible as well as in the group) can be analysed.

These kind of technical approaches help us to understand biblical texts as coherent passages, and to experience the motives, forces and feelings behind them. By acting out these feelings in our Bible study group we can make sure that the texts are understood more deeply than if we use only our intellects to interpret the message of the Bible. All these steps should enable us 1) to grasp the essential content of each text and 2) to translate this message into contemporary life.

The message can be communicated by using whatever modern channels of information the group finds appropriate. One possibility is called "transposition" which means to use "sociodrama". The topic is chosen from the Bible, and the group then acts out the Bible's liberating message in a meaningful contemporary way. The same kind of underlying forces and feelings should be involved as are found in the original text. Most stories and parables of the Bible are suitable to be used in this kind of experiment.

* * *

I would like to conclude with some good practical advice given by Hans-Ruedi Weber in his brochure **Experiments with Bible Study**, (Biblical Studies, WCC, Geneva 1972, pp. 20f) which I highly recommend.

"Sometimes it is impossible to work in small groups, either because the number of participants is too large; because not enough Bible study enablers and resource persons are available; because the time is too short for breaking up into groups or because the localities for small group work are not at disposal. In this case it is not necessary to fall back on the traditional biblical teaching through monologues which are so seldom true Bible studies. Even with a group of a hundred or a thousand persons a Bible study enabler can let every member actively participate in the study by using the following alternative to small group work:

- After a short introductory period of straightforward teaching about the background of the text to be studied, the enabler stops his exposition with a challenging question concerning the text.

- During a short period of silence all members study the text with a view to answering the question asked. Such periods of silence and individual study are important not only in large plenaries but also in small study groups because not every one's mind works at the same speed. Slow thinkers are often very deep thinkers!
- This two or three minutes' period of silent individual study should be followed by a period of five to ten minutes for exchanging the discoveries made by each participant with his or her neighbour. With almost every seating arrangement it is possible for two or three persons to talk together without having to shift their chairs and tables, and without having to go into a time-consuming dividing up into different groups.
- After this, a short period of general discussion between the whole group and the Bible study resource person can follow. When the assembly is too large or the acoustics of the hall too bad, the assembly can be represented by a panel of about three persons who sit together with the enablers on the platform and have access to a microphone. If the panel members are well chosen and represent the various types of participants, very soon the participants will identify with "their" spokesman on the panel and in this way indirectly participate in the discussion. (These panel discussions must of course remain spontaneous and not be rehearsed beforehand. It does not matter if the Bible study enabler and/or resource person will sometimes have no answer to the questions asked or if the panel discussion runs less smoothly than a well-rehearsed TV-show).
- The same process of straightforward teaching, silent individual study, exchange with neighbours and general or panel discussion can be repeated twice or three times without too much fatigue of the participants, because they are really involved in the process of study.

The above described method can often fruitfully be used also for small Bible study groups. Especially the exchange with neighbours before the general discussion is important. This allows the timid and less eloquent participants to formulate first their questions or discoveries in a private discussion before bringing their contribution to the whole of the group (which otherwise they might never dare to do). It also gives a chance to "let off steam" to those persons who always must speak, whether they have something to contribute to the subject under discussion or not. Having had the opportunity to talk they are thus enabled to listen. It is a general experience that both small group discussions and large plenary discussions are much better after such a process of private discussions with one's neighbours."

January 1989 Wille Riekkinen

JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

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THE STRUGGLE FOR JPIC:
A Sign of the Work of the Spirit in Our Time

Theological Reflections on Romans 8

Chapter 8 of Paul's letter to the Romans grasps the basic essence of the human problem and states in a fundamental way the nature of the divine solution to it. Its decidedly predestinarian character is brought about by Paul's insistence that nothing happens anywhere in Creation without God's overruling; but what goes along with it is God's redemptive grace which reaches every nook and cranny of God's creation. Thus, God's act in Christ overcomes our sinful nature and makes us co-heirs with Christ, but it is not just human beings that await the revelation of God's glory but the entire realm of Creation as well which shares with humankind the agony and torment of human fallenness. Because of its theological depth and universality, Chapter 8 of the Romans anticipates in an essential way the theological problem we are faced with in the struggle for "justice, peace, and the integrity of Creation."

The Law of the Spirit versus the Law of Sin and Death

Paul declares that "there is now no condemnation awaiting those who belong to Christ Jesus." To the Jewish mind this declaration comes as a radical contradiction of an era filled with tremendous anxiety wherein a Jew spent practically all her/his life seeking to escape or shield him/her self against God's condemnation. The Law has been set forth by their religious tradition as the way by which one can secure oneself against that condemnation, so that one's knowledge of it and its fulfillment guaranteed one's individual person against God's wrath. The Jew, in Paul's understanding, is caught in a dilemma: on the one hand, it is almost a human impossibility for anyone to know all that the law requires, let alone fulfill them; on the other hand, if perchance, she or he fulfills them, the very knowledge of it tempts her or him to think that she or he is ontologically and morally self-sufficient on her or his own, and no longer needs the grace of God!

So the road to righteousness has become the broad avenue to sin and death. The sinful person's attitude to the Law reveals the basic essence of human sinning: the human being seeking to be on his/her own, and be independent of any power in the universe, even God's. To be secure in all that one is and in all that one does, now and in the future, is the desire of the natural human person and it is sin when that desire is sought apart from and in contradiction to God's offer of security and care. To establish one's security by what one can know and do is the perennial condition of natural man, and the incessant and growing demand to be secure creates the fundamental insecurity of every human being and of every age.

Now we see the same paranoiac drive for security pushes our own age to destruction and death. How do people in our own time seek to establish their own security? A swelling bank account. Insurances against a rainy day. A national economy that continues to grow. Military capability to protect one's interests and to advance them. A nuclear capability to insure the invulnerability of a nation's security and interests. All these seem very rational and hardly any evil intent can be imputed against it. But what it does is to create a spirit of competition, of encroaching upon each other's interests, that soon an atmosphere of suspicion, envy and distrust envelops the whole human community. At its base, is an economic system that is geared towards growth and trades favorably with the economies of other nations, and which is re-enforced by political and military power so that it can insure for itself an international economic system that is favorable to its own continued economic growth and military strength. What this means is the operation of huge industries at home and abroad that make the greatest profits with available resources; it means the exploitation of workers, the production of goods that may be dangerous to those who consume them, the operation of industries that pollutes the air, lakes, rivers, and oceans and warms up the atmosphere, it means being caught up in a do or die competition with other nations where each sovereign state squeezes the most out of its resources and its people --- a competition that provides a dynamics to history that pushes nations to war.

Here in one fell swoop are the forces that bring about injustice, plunge nations in situations of confrontation and conflict, and make radical alterations to the earth's ecological balance. The feverish search of modern societies for security underlines the basic problems which the WCC's programme of "justice, peace, and the integrity of Creation," seeks to wrestle with. And it is not just the distorted vision of people at the top that is responsible for dreadful and precarious human situations, but the rank and file of the population of nations who keep hankering for the security that wealth and power provide and bring up leaders who, more often than not, respond in an almost demonic way to fulfill what their own people ordain. The problem of tne Romans is exactly the same as ours --- it is a variation on the same theme.

The Spirit of Jesus

The apostle Paul reminds his readers that they have been "freed from the cycle of sin and death" and are therefore not like the unbelievers who are controlled by their desire for the security that the Law gives which really leads to death. "But you are not like that. You are controlled by your new nature if you have the Spirit of God living in you." What does it mean to have the spirit of God live in us? Paul and his readers lived in a mythological world where anyone can be possessed or freed from spiritual powers. It was a world populated not merely by human beings but by spirits, powers, principalities which may be good or evil. We no longer live in such a world. Ours is a world of science, of rationalization, a world moved and shaped by human action. Where and how do we encounter God in our world? Today God is in the spirit of those who struggle for genuine humanity in our world; God is among those who struggle for justice, for freedom, human dignity and peace. God is among those who truly care for Creation and seek to preserve its life-giving and life-sustaining powers, and its beauty and recreative powers.

Jesus exhibited this spirit in a supreme way in all that he said and did. Jesus spoke of the poor as the social group to which the reign of God belonged, and he identified himself with them and took up their cause to the point of giving his life for them. The poor and the oppressed with which Jesus identified himself were a by-product of the religious, political and socio-political powers of his own time --- forces that were so consumed in seeking their own security --- and by throwing himself in solidarity, Jesus set forces in motion that undermined the sources of injustice and unjust and violent peace. We experience God's presence when we take up the cause of God's little ones and are given the certitude that we stand in the truth and are borne by it, but to do so is to oppose the powers of this world. Suffering will be our lot, but this is our participation in the sufferings of Christ.

The Struggle: The Suffering of the Children of God and God's Creation

"Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will give us later. For all creation is waiting patiently and hopefully for that future day when God will resurrect his children." The passage that follows is not easy to interpret suffused as it is by Paul's understanding of predestination. Paul perceives Creation as waiting for God to reveal God's children for it has been condemned to lose its purpose, not because it wanted to, but that God himself willed it so. Obviously, Paul wishes to keep God's absolute sovereignty over all Creation which in the mythological understanding of the time was penetrated into and held captive by spiritual powers so much so that Creation could no longer will what it really wanted to will. Nonetheless, it was God's will that permitted Creation to fall into that condition. Perhaps Paul had contended profoundly with the physical drives in his own body and was so horrified by the cravings of the flesh, and that he projected what he found in his own body upon the whole of Creation! The flesh as God's Creation ought to have a better kind of willing than what he had experienced, so it must have been subjected by God to forces outside of its own.

In our time we are aware of the forces of greed, domination, and uncaring to which Creation has been subjected. Planet earth is steadily being subjected to the pollution of our industries, poison-using agricultural systems, forms of energy generation that alter the eco-systems, deforestation, and continuous nuclear testing that cause the earth to dispense death instead of life. It is very clear that the ways of human beings in the world, as they pursue their security against that of others drives society more and more towards a scramble for power which pushes people to rape and plunder mother earth to get the energy and wealth stored in her bosom. Here are some statistics for us to ponder:

- All over the world 11 million hectares of tropical forests and other woodlands are lost annually.

- About 60% of the world's agricultural lands have suffered losses of biological productivity and are fast turning into useless wastelands at a time when the earth's population is expected to double within 35 years.

- Industrialized nations fuel combustion at high temperatures now belches out into the atmosphere annually some 20 million metric tons of nitric oxide which gives rise to smog, acid rain, and "the green house effect."

- Nuclear testing goes unabated by the great military powers which make their immediate environment something of a hell for the people who live in the vicinity of the test areas such as the South Pacific's Bikini Atoll.

Even if "peace were breaking out" and the peoples of the world were to be spared a nuclear holocaust, this relentless attack by humankind on mother earth would surely push the world to doomsday. It is now clear that humankind's obsession with its own security has created an economics and politics of greed and domination that is fast turning planet earth into a sphere of death.

The Spirit's Pleading with God in Groans that Words Cannot Express

Much more than the Apostle Paul, we have reason to declare that "we know, the whole created universe groans in all its parts as if in the pangs of childbirth." "The whole created universe" is a living reality; it has its own unique freedom which is its spontaneity to obey God's will as this is embedded in its wholeness and its parts. And the living God is luring all created things into the fulfillment of God's covenant with the whole of his creation. But humankind's distorted and willful exercise of its freedom --- to be on its own, to create its own basis and provide its own security --- has dragged planet earth into its own fallenness and miserable condition. Because of this subjection to the self-seeking will of humankind which has inflicted deep wounds upon it, Creation "groans in all its parts."

But the children of God, those who are open to the indwelling of the Spirit, share the pain and the agony of creation. It is a sign of the presence of the Spirit when people give voice to the suffering of Creation and seek to turn things around that it may respond to God's healing action. And such persons wait for God's action to make them his "children and set their whole body free."

"Waiting on the Lord," in the Bible is not a passive but an active endeavor. The Hebrew word connotes "tension" and "endurance", which means being in a state of expectation as one struggles towards that which is waited for. Thus to wait is to "keep in God's ways," (Ps. 37:34) and to "hold fast to love and justice" (Hosea 12:6). Waiting in our particular situation with reference to the groaning of creation is to oppose and expose the operations of forces in society that continually alter for the worse the processes in Creation, and to advocate vigorously ways of relating to Creation that would restore its integrity. Indirectly, to deal rightly and justly with the poor and the oppressed is to reach a just and wholesome way of relating with Creation, for such an action involves a genuine resolve to bring about a life-giving and life-sustaining environment to the least of God's children who are always relegated by forces of society to the most blighted areas of Creation. To work for justice and peace for the wretched of the earth demands that we insure for them an environment, nay a world, where they can have a magnificent frolic without anxiety and fear in the bosom of Creation.

Thus the work for justice and peace is organically linked up with the work that promotes and preserves the integrity of Creation. Paul perceives a dynamic unity on the one hand, between beings who are created in the image of God and potential bearers of the divine spirit; and Creation, that reality which makes it possible for human beings to be on the other. In fact, humankind is part of Creation --- they cannot be apart from it --- and Creation looks up to the highest fulfillment of human beings as the fulfillment of its own highest potentialities. Paul projects a vision of Creation which is not yet palpable to human senses and processes of

ratiocination, for it is one based on hope in the author of our salvation --- the God who acted to set us free in Jesus Christ, and thus he calls on the bearers of the Spirit to endure, to struggle, in moving towards that day when the children of God will be revealed.

The Spirit's Assistance to Our Weakness

"In the same way the Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness. We do not even know how we are to pray, but through our inarticulate groans the Spirit himself is pleading for us..."

To struggle for "justice, peace, and the integrity of Creation" is an enormous undertaking; its scope embraces all of contemporary history and all of planet earth as well, and even far beyond it; and the forces arrayed against those who do have the power to imprison, intimidate, paralyze, and kill. In fact, those who are struggling for "justice, peace and the integrity of Creation" have suffered all of these things. In the face of such an undertaking, we are weak and confused, and do not even know how to pray. But the Spirit comes to our assistance and makes use of our agony and pain, in interceding to God on our behalf. Paul declares the fact that those who struggle for justice and peace are our assurance that the Spirit intercedes with God for them! And he sees that God is working to bring out that which is good with those who love God . This is Paul's great reversal of the ordinary perception of historical reality where he sees the suffering of the just and the good as evidence that God is on their side and is working with them! What a bold statement of faith. In spite of the fact that the whole of Creation groans in travail, Paul declares that God is at work in history, and that God will surely bring the fulness of God's will into realization. Such faith is the basis of the predestinarian character of Paul's theological declarations. For us, it is the basis of the hope that the present as well as the future is in the hands of God, and that all that we do in his Spirit will never pass into nothingness because they and the very materials God uses in his work in history.

"If God is on our side, who is against us?"

Paul is so absolutely certain of God's total sovereignty and providential control of all things that he completely abandons all fear and anxiety in taking up the struggle against forces that bring about injustice, chaos and conflict, and make a sordid mess of God's Creation. The cause of justice, peace, and of an abused and groaning Creation is the cause for which Jesus pleads. It is the reading of the people's movements for justice, peace, human dignity, and the wholeness of Creation that their cause is of one piece with the cause of Jesus, and that the Spirit of Jesus is once more irrupting in their midst. And Jesus has revealed to the eye of faith that his cause is invincible: Jesus who embraced the cause of the poor and the oppressed, and carried forward their cause all the way to his own execution, has become a revelation of who God is, and therefore we can now see that God is at work among people who struggle for justice, peace and the wholeness of Creation who, small and insignificant though they are, cannot be conquered by any power in history, but is rather the power by which other powers are interrogated, undermined, and transformed.

In spite of this glorious picture of faith and hope, Paul is not in any way oblivious of the pain, anguish, and hardships of the struggle he has undertaken. So he speaks of affliction and hardship, of persecution, hunger, nakedness, peril and the sword, and of "being done to death for thy sake all day long" --- these, no glorious victories --- are the daily fare of those who take up the cause of Christ. Today in many countries of the Third World people disappear, and are assassinated, are imprisoned for long years, and tortured unto death because of their work for justice and peace; and in various parts of the affluent West many well-meaning persons are going through some kind of kenosis to be in solidarity with the poor in their midst and overseas. We have to embrace pain, learn to live with misery and stare death in the face in the course of the struggle.

But Paul's sure and unshakeable belief that "the love of Christ" will always be with us, causes him to exult and declare that "overwhelming victory is ours through him who loved us." We cannot afford to believe and affirm something less in spite of all the overwhelming odds against us. Paul fought against powers that were ready to kill anyone who stood in their way, but they have lost all their threat and power over Paul, for in Christ he had already died, and in Christ he had already won. Such is the faith needed in the struggle for "justice, peace and the integrity of Creation."

Levi V Oracion

JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

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THE BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS OF JUSTICE AND PEACE FOR AFRICA TODAY

by Basil Manning.

INTRODUCTION

Surely everybody within church and theological circles knows what the biblical foundations of justice and peace are, and I thought, well, why choose this subject? Yet, the more I thought about it the more I realized that, most probably, justice and peace were chosen because they are so relevant to Africa today. And yet, there are many of us who have not even begun to recognize just how important those issues are. This may be so for a number of reasons.

Firstly, there are a number of misconceptions about the issue of justice and peace in Africa today. Some would say that nobody can doubt that the biblical witness is about justice and peace. However, such justice and peace exist in a distant future, in some other-worldly place. If we are to obey biblical injunctions, then, certainly we are not concerned about them in this world, but rather about some future paradise to come where justice and peace will reign forever.

Secondly, there are persons who say that the term "peace" and the term "justice" are political, and it is better for Christians or a church not to get involved in these issues, because it is our task to direct our energies exclusively upon the saving of souls. If we talk about liberation at all, then we should talk about liberation of the soul. It is also better not to use the word "liberation" even if salvation means just that. Rather, we must use the word "salvation", so that we are not misinterpreted or accused of being political. Yet, of course, if we look at our own tradition and background as Africans, we recognize a major contradiction in such arguments. As Africans, we have a wholistic approach toward life. For us there is an inter-penetration between past, present and future. To divide past, present and future or divide the whole person into body, mind and soul, is something alien and alienating to African tradition. If such divisions are suggested, we recognize that they are all part of the whole. When we mimic others who say that it is better to be concerned about the soul and not worry about issues of justice and peace (the physical or material), I would suggest that we be very careful of what we are doing, lest we deny part of ourselves, our traditions and our background.

Thirdly, there are people who certainly feel that we should be concerned about justice and peace issues, but this concern should be directed to other places. We who live outside South Africa should be concerned about justice and peace in South Africa. Similarly, we who live outside Angola should be concerned about justice and peace in Angola. We could add Namibia, Mozambique, Senegal and other places within Africa. Those who take this point of view basically argue that Christians should have a selective concern, selective imagination, if you like. We should be concerned about people and places that the whole world is concerned about. But always, our concern about justice and peace is out there, never here. That is safer. In our worship and in our prayers we can safely pray for justice and peace in other places. Never at home. But in terms of addressing those issues of injustice and lack of peace in our situations where we have responsibility, where we have power (direct or indirect), where we should be saying something and doing something. Oh no! That is another story. Better not to do anything about where we are!

The biblical record, if it is about anything, is about justice and peace. The Bible's central message is a promise, a concern for a kingdom of God in this world, a kingdom in which the goodness of creation as God first intended can be recreated and re-established. The biblical record is concerned about the re-creation of a kingdom in which injustice, inequality and oppression will no longer be the order of the day, but be replaced by peace and justice, and in which there will be a sharing of people's gifts, of people's love, just as God had originally intended.

That is the overwhelming message of the biblical record.

DEFINITIONS

Let us turn to definitions. First, the definition of justice. I looked around in different theological word books and dictionaries to try and find a definition for justice, and thought that if I could not find a comprehensive one, at least some elements might surface, which could help us in our thinking today. I was disappointed but not surprised because I had actually seen before, in the Theological Word Book of the Bible, that there is only one quarter of a column article by Norman Snaith in which nothing is said about the richness of the total biblical message on the issue of justice. It seems that the word never actually appears in the Old Testament and only very rarely in the New Testament. To be fair to Snaith, he does later have an article on "righteousness" in which he points out that the Hebrew word "Mishpat" means righteousness and that tsedeq and tsedeqah point to, and I quote: "that which conforms to the norm, and for the Hebrews this norm is the character of God Himself." From this one can conclude (for those of you who like to think this way), that the biblical tradition does not "sloganize" the issue of justice; it does not shout "justice, justice, justice!" all the time. Rather the true understanding of justice in the biblical tradition stems from the character of God Himself. To understand justice, therefore, we have to look at the acts of God as revealed first and foremost in the Old Testament and then in the New Testament. Only then we will understand not only the character of God, but the character of righteousness and justice as well.

For myself, I prefer the way José Miranda treats the subject. The Hebrew word "shaphat" (to judge, to govern) was translated by Jewish writers of the Septuagint into the Greek term, dikaiosyne (a noun, applying to one having the attributes of dikailos the righteous one, the one who judges justly). In their interpretation of "Shaphat", the writers chose to expand the meaning of "shaphat" from its more restricted, casuistic sense of judging or rendering judgement between conflicting parties (although "shaphat" has also the sense of vindication and liberation), to the more active "mishpat" which incorporates the custom and habit of doing justice, or prescribes the behavior of one who, like "dikaiosyne", judges justly. Here, too, but more frequently than "Shaphat" the term "mishpat" describes the doing of justice as an act of vindication and liberation. The writers of the Septuagint interpret "Shaphat" by "dikaiosyne" - or one of its forms - twenty-seven times in the Septuagint. Miranda observes that this interpretation demonstrates that the Septuagint writers understood the meaning of "shaphat" as the practice of justice, as a way of life. Miranda goes on to say that an even more eloquent statement is the translation of "mishpat", which makes its appearance forty-eight times in the Septuagint, also in a form of the word "dikaiosyne". The conclusion Miranda draws is that "shaphat" is expanded, coming closer to "mishpat", both of these words being translated into a form of "dikaiosyne", one having the attributes of the one who judges justly.

The second point Miranda makes is that there are some verses where it just would not make sense to translate "shaphat" as "to judge", and he quotes a few examples. Let us look at them:

Psalm 72, verse 4, for instance, expresses the desire that the King "save" (shaphat) the poor and crush the oppressors, Miranda points out that with no amount of subtlety could we understand this to mean a desire that the king come and "judge" the poor first and, after seing that they are innocent, repel the oppressor. Therefore, the essential meaning of "shaphat" is not "to judge" legally between two parties but rather "to do justice to the weak and the oppressed". The verb "shaphat" again, he points out, is used in Psalm 96:13 and 98:9 similarly, and if we try to translate it in the legalistic sense of the term "to judge" we cannot understand why the earth rejoices because God is coming to judge it, when as the Psalmist proclaims that the earth rejoices because God is coming to "save it" (shaphat)* Miranda explains that the term "shopatim" which we translate as "judges" of the Old Testament also describes avenging chiefs who liberated Israel from oppression by powerful invaders. We see this in Judges 2:16-19.

Throughout the entire book of Judges, there is not one instance of a judicial act performed in a court of law ascribed to these chiefs raised up by God, yet each is called Shaphat. It seems here that the people of Israel cried out to Jahweh because they were oppressed, and that Jahweh raised up men and women from among them who delivered the people from oppression. Those God raised up were Shophatim of Israel. It certainly makes sense then to interpret an archaic meaning of "shaphat" as to "save from oppression" and not "to judge" as we usually have interpreted it.

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*("Saving" and "judging" are not mutually exclusive ideas. To save and to judge often bear the same connotation of "acquittal" or "liberation". - Ed.).

So the verb, here, seems to mean a liberation in and for justice. Miranda supports his case further by referring to the use of the word "shaphat" through its etymological cousins in other languages in the Near East of that time: Arkkadian, Egyptian and Ugaritic. Here, again, he points out that the root of the word is used to express an idea of "to save the oppressed from injustice" and it is in this sense that it is sometimes employed in the Old Testament.

Let us look at just two examples: In Psalm 82 God is seen to be challenging other gods to give justice to the orphans and the poor and to save the wretched from the power of the evil doers. The gods fail to do this, and the verdict of death is pronounced over them. Here the psalmist does not distinguish Jahweh from the other gods on the basis of personality, but rather on action: it is Jahweh's act of protecting the poor against oppression by the powerful which is referred to and of condemning those who fail to do so.

On the basis of this it is clear then that, although we have long been under the illusion that the word justice does not appear in the biblical tradition, the word shaphat and the word mishpat have, by and large, been misinterpreted by scholars who apply casuistic definitions more appropriate to courts of the West, in which a judge is a disinterested figure attempting to ascertain the facts of a case upon which a verdict of guilt or innocence is rendered. On the contrary, we have a picture of God being biased towards the poor and disinherited and the exploited and the oppressed: that is the performance of justice. This, of course, is not in conflict with what is said by other scholars, namely that we can only deduce from looking into the character of God the meaning of justice. The important difference here is that is is false to say that the biblical record does not use the word "justice". It is there, very clearly there, if we understand the use of the word "shaphat" or the use of the word "mishpat" in its context within the biblical tradition.

We turn now to an understanding of the word peace. The Hebrew word as we know is "shalom" and the Greek word "eirene". I prefer the Hebrew word "shalom" because its meaning is much wider and deeper.. We translate "shalom" as peace, very often understood only as the absence of conflict, the absence of war. Such a restricted meaning does grave injustice to the word. Shalom was a common greeting among Jewish people in the Old Testament days and is still the case in modern Israel. It is rich with nuances, rich with depth. Shalom refers more to individual and community life and people's experience than the kind of watery soup which we make of it in expressions like "peace of mind" or "peace of soul". The word does not in any way assume such an individualistic, immaterial or shallow spiritual interpretation. It is a positive condition of peace, of joy, of human reciprocity, a social harmony of exalted justice. I have often said that the word "pula" in Botswana is the word which comes closest to "shalom" because it expresses hope for prosperity, hope for sharing, hope for good rains at the right time, hope for justice and equity amongst people, based on the good fruits which God gives us and which we can enjoy together. Like the word "shalom" it also signifies abundance, good health and neighbourliness. But above all, it signifies justice. As one writer expressed it: "it is a time when one person will invite others to come and sit under his fig tree and share with them the good fruits which God has given to us."

I personally think that this understanding of the word "shalom", in terms of the wholeness of life and harmony, is far more parallel to our thinking in Africa, than to the narrower interpretation of the absence of war or the absence of conflict of the West. In defining "shalom" we see how interrelated it is with the concept and practice of justice. This is very well summarized in Psalm 85:11-13, anticipating the time of shalom, the time when God establishes justice within the land where, as Elsa Tamez puts it: "God not only calls for but is constantly concerned with concretization of love."

> "Love and truth will meet,
> justice and peace will kiss each other,
> truth will spring up from the ground,
> and justice will fall down from the sky.
>
> Yea the Lord will give what is good,
> And our land will yield its increase.
> Justice will go before him,
> and make his footsteps a way."

Justice and peace in the biblical traditon are intertwined. There is no peace without justice in the Bible. Regimes may, if they will, constantly hope for peace. In a situation of turmoil which threatens their power they want peace. Peace at any price. The Botha regime constantly calls for peace. There is constant condemnation of the rising up of people who seek justice, with the incumbent regime always calling for peace. But, of course, there will be no peace without justice. In the Old Testament or in the New the message was very clear: "THERE CAN BE NO PEACE WITHOUT JUSTICE!"

Jeremiah preaching and inveighing against injustice in Judah is quite clear. We read from Jeremiah 6:13 onward: "From the least to the greatest, all are greedy for gain, prophets alike, all practice deceit. They dress the wounds of my people as though it were not serious. Peace, peace they say when there is no peace! Are they ashamed of their loathsome conduct? No! They have no shame at all! They do not even know how to blush! So they will fall among the fallen. They will be brought down, when I punish them, says the Lord."

Jeremiah is saying that is is not good enough for us to shout "peace, peace, when there is no peace." It is not good enough for us just to dress the wounds of the people, to do ambulance work, to pick up the pieces without profoundly addressing those issues which cause injustice in our midst. What we are inclined to do is to give handouts when people are starving, to give blankets when people are cold, to put up tents when people are too poor to build homes, to give them a piece-meal job with a barely decent wage. All of this is just putting bandaids on the wounds of people. The underlying causes of the suffering of people are structural, injustice rooted within society. We cannot give first aid to people grievously wounded and shout while they bleed to death, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace. There will be no peace without justice.

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

Obviously, in this brief paper, we cannot look at the Bible as a whole, book by book, to analyze the biblical foundations for peace and justice. However, I do want to look at three particular sections:

I want to look at the period of the Exodus and see what particular guidance we can get from there. I want to look selectively at some of the prophets and hear what they have to say. Then I want to look at the incarnation: the life and work of Jesus of Nazareth and see whether we can gain any assistance on the subject from that life and that one man's particular history.

THE EXODUS STORY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS:

It is ironic that before I went to theological school, and, I suppose, even a bit afterward, the incidents of the story of the Exodus that stood out in my mind were Moses and the bullrushes, the burning bush, the plagues, the Passover and then, finally, the children of Israel fleeing Egypt. It is only in recent years, by my study of black and liberation theologians, that I have been able to discover new motifs in this story, which speaks very eloquently to our situation in Africa today and particularly to Southern Africa.

I think it is important to look at the first chapters of the book of Exodus because they record the levels of oppression in society which we experience today. It seems to me, too, that when we look at the levels of injustice in our situation and analyze it, that we are able to understand what justice in their situation really meant. If our analysis is wrong then the kind of efforts that we make in Africa, (or elsewhere for that matter), will also be wrong. The Exodus story describes what the nature of oppression is, so that when, in Exodus chapter 3, God speaks to Moses and says: "I have seen the affliction of my people, I have heard their cry, and I have come to deliver them," we know exactly what is being talked about. Let us summarize very quickly the number of levels of injustice which appear in the Exodus. First, we see the enslavement and exploitation of workers - something which happens everywhere on the continent of Africa. According to the Exodus (Exodus 1:11) Pharaoh set task-masters over the Israelites to afflict them with heavy burdens. The taskmasters colluded and contributed to the expansion of the Empire.

We also need to recognize that in situations of extreme oppression and great fear, this kind of exploitation has other purposes working very subtly. Oppressors want to dull the senses of people; they want to keep them down, and they certainly do not want them to multiply. So Pharaoh had this in mind. He hoped that the physical exhaustion of the Hebrews would mean that they would multiply at a lower rate; they would have less frequent sexual relations. Secondly, dulling of their minds would mean that they would not think at all about freedom. But thirdly and, most importantly, pressing them hard would strengthen the empire by using the Israelites to build store cities.*

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*Store cities: Cities built for the purpose of "storing" the wealth of the Empire. Ed.

Here, Exodus is very clear. The Pharaoh who "knew not Joseph" was afraid of the Hebrews. He said that these people are going to become too many and, if we are attacked from outside, they are going to join up with our enemies and attack us! Does it sound familiar? It is fear like this which contributes to the fact that we have so many refugees in Africa today? Is it fear like this which leads to opposition parties within Africa not being tolerated? As the story unfolds, we find that this enslavement and exploitation of workers and putting them so hard to labour did not work. So, the next step which was chosen (sometimes this step is chosen a bit later in an African context but, here, Pharaoh chose it early), the next step was GENOCIDE. Pharaoh told the midwives, "When you serve the Hebrew women as midwives, and see them on the birthstool, if you see that it is a son, kill the son." So, open genocide. This, of course, did not work either because the midwives would not obey. They lied to Pharaoh and said that the Hebrew women were too strong. As the story unfolds we see that the Hebrews had been accused of being too idle, and their idleness caused them to want their freedom. Moses and Aaron were accused of being outside agitators who came to confuse the people, cause them to rise up against their oppression, and it was only because they were not working hard enough that they even had time to think about making trouble or being free at all. Then, as now, of course, like most situations of oppression when justice is demanded, those who oppress will come up with all sorts of deceptive concessions to keep people quiet. We, ourselves, within the church can look within churches in Africa and see to what extent we collude with some of those deceptive concessions for the sake of a fragile, so-called peace.

In Southern Africa, such deceptive concessions have taken the guise of "bantustans", tri-cameral structures, new local government structures, all as attempts to divert the people away from demanding justice. Within free Africa a 10% wage and some minor reforms in terms of land distribution have sugared the bitterness, but, by and large, injustice continues. In relation to the Exodus story, we have talked about some of these issues, as though they took place within national borders. But really, the Hebrews were an outside people, a people who came from the North and settled the Goshen area of the Nile delta during the time of Joseph, becoming a settled community within Egypt, but who were nevertheless considered alien when the new Pharaoh came to power. Even then, there was an international dimension.

In Africa, very often, oppression has just that kind of international dimension. In South Africa quite clearly our major struggle is against settler colonialism, for the reclamation of the land and the establishment of a democratic (some would add socialist) Azania.

The international dimension of our struggle in that situation is obvious. In the rest of Africa that kind of colonialism, or neo-colonialism as it is more aptly titled, is sometimes difficult to see. Much oppression of our people is often determined externally, although meted out by people within our situation. These people are our taskmasters. Someone called them agents of oppression, someone called them puppets, some would call them as Franz Fanon did: "black skins - white masks." Fundamentally their role is to perpetuate exploitation born in colonial times with some minor concessions to the people so that "stability" can be maintained to serve the interest of oppressors. Peace at any price. And no justice.

It is into just this situation of absolute oppression, of absolute exploitation of workers, of maintaining peace through coercion, that God intervenes in the Exodus story. He comes to Moses and says "I've had enough - I've seen the affliction of my people, I have heard their cry, I've come to deliver them and I am taking them away and giving them a land where they will be able to live without oppression and exploitation. I will take them out of this situation of injustice to one where they will experience justice." God does deliver them; but, of course, the story is far from over.

THE PROPHETS

We skip centuries and now look upon Israel, first one, and then two kingdoms: Israel and Judah. You will see an army with cavalry; you will see princes and prophets richly attired looking down from the walls upon half-naked men lifting stone upon stone to build a palace. You will see tax collectors. You will see great wealth and greater poverty. Despite the fact that God delivered the Hebrew people out of Egypt and out of slavery, despite the fact that he is a God of justice and that he did justice for them, those whom he had called and with whom he made a special covenant, became people who meted out injustice upon each other as well as to "outsiders". When the kingdom of Israel was born under David, David's plot to kill Uriah in order to hide his responsibility for the pregnancy of Uriah's wife Bathsheba, does not go unjudged. God, here, is concerned for the underdog, Uriah, and judges David in order that justice may be seen to be done. The prophets constantly remind the whole people of Israel that they were once slaves within Egypt, and because they experienced injustice and deliverance are therefore expected to behave justly to the poor, the orphans, the stranger and the refugee.

And so, as recorded in 1 Kings 21: When Ahab out of the greed of his wife Jezebel wanted Namaan's vineyard and went to great lengths to get it, including having him killed, the prophet Elijah holds no words back in bringing total condemnation to Ahab. Elijah confronts him with these words: "Have you killed and also taken possession?" God will not turn a blind eye to such injustice where greed for land results in the oppression and even the murder of others. And, is not the land question a very important question in Africa as a whole?

Land, for instance, is the essential question in South Africa; the exploitation and oppression which takes place as a result of others wanting to hold on to it or have more of it than they deserve, is worthy of deep reflection.

Amos the tent-maker and prophet reminds us that God has no time for our worship. He has no time for our singing; he has no time for our Psalms; he has no time for our prayers while there is injustice in our midst. If we truly want to worship then we should work for justice and work for peace, work for an equal sharing of the land. That is the worship which will please Yahweh.

From the message of prophets we can generally distinguish between the marks of injustice and the marks of justice. Marks of injustice seem to be:

The accumulation of wealth stolen fron the poor;
their land,
their wages,

their food
their houses,
increasing their powerlessness,
Idolatry,
The unjust administration of authority leading to
their degradation and violation,
their endurance of violence and death.

The marks of justice appear to be:

an equitable distribution of possessions,
power,
the elimination of poverty,
the presence of God,
a just government,
the creation of more and more ways in which people can relate to each other (in Africa we might call that community),
the realization of shalom - peace, freedom, truth and life.

These lists contradict each other. They reveal conflict showing how there is constant tension and struggle involved in working for justice. Unfortunately this same struggle can be seen amongst ourselves. The Old Testament record witnesses to God as the One who liberates, the One who works increasingly for justice, who works for its establishment. The biblical tradition does not encourage us to sit back and say "God will liberate, God will establish justice." On the contrary, the prospets continually challenge Israel to be God's hands and feet in the world. As the chosen people, the covenant people are required to do justice in the land. This is a stipulation of the Covenant, a relationship with God and a just, responsible relationship with others.

WE TURN TO THE NEW TESTAMENT

I would like to raise only a few points:

First, the incarnation: God's inner disposition of bias towards the oppressed continues in the New Testament. The incarnation is a statement from God, who chooses to become a human being for all humanity, amongst a first century Jewish people under Roman colonial rule. God takes sides in a very concrete form. Some people remark that God could have had a head start by choosing the more eloquent Greeks or the more powerful Romans as the juncture for incarnation. Why choose a nobody people? Why choose the most poor, the most oppressed, the most ridiculed people of the Roman empire? If there was to be a new start maybe God should have chosen a better crowd. And of those, the least regarded of the most despised, the "Am-Ha-Aretz", the people of the land. But in continuity with his character and promise, God identifies with Israel, once again colonized.

Secondly, God's bias towards the poor is again revealed through the Magnificat. Mary sings:

My soul proclaims the goodness of the Lord
and my spirit exults in God my Saviour;
because he has looked upon his lowly handmaid ...
He has shown the power of his arm,
He has routed the proud of heart,
He has pulled down princes from their thrones
and exalted the lowly.
The hungry he has filled with good things,
the rich sent empty away ... (Luke 1: 46-53).

Mary sings about restructuring the order of society, turning it upside down, transforming the very bases of the social order. Mary is not singing about private morality. Similarly, with Zechariah, the priest recognized the "Good News" as a fulfillment of the promise of liberation and the establishment of justice. When he saw Mary, he sang "Blessed be the Lord, God of Israel, for he has visited the people, he has come to their rescue and he has raised up for us a power for salvation in the House of his servant David, even as he proclaimed, by the mouth of his holy prophets from ancient times, that he would save us from our enemies and from the hands of all who hat us." (Luke 1:68-71).

Here again is the content of the Good News, we will be saved from our enemies, and justice will be established in the land. The prevailing order cannot remain as it is; but now there is ressurrection, life, hope, change, things will not, cannot stay as they are. That is the content of the Good News.

This concern for justice and the fulfillment of the promise of liberation means that the "Good News" is not good news for some. The shepherds heard the message "I bring you Good News of great joy which will come to all the people" and accepted the birth of the Christ as being their "Good News". But King Herod did not accept this good news as his "Good News", it was not so "good" for him. He feared the challenge to his rule and ordered the killing of all male children in Bethlehem under two years of age (Matthew 1:16).

When Jesus appears for the first time in Galilee at the synagogue, he purposely opens the scroll of Isaiah at the place where it is written:

The spirit of the Lord has been given to me,
for he has anointed me,
He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor;
to proclaim liberty to captives
and to the blind new sight,
to set the downtrodden free,
to proclaim the Lord's year of favour.
(Luke 4:18-19).

I do not think the words "captive" and "oppressed" need any debating, but it seems that there is still a debate on who "the poor" are. Yet the biblical record is very straightforward on this point. The poor are individuals inferior to the rich or the powerful. Their predicament is not the result of chance, but due to the action of oppressors. As in Amos 2:6-7, "... because they have sold the virtuous man for silver and the poor man for a pair of sandals, because they trample on the heads of ordinary people and push the poor out of their path."

And again in Ezekiel 22:29: "The people of the land practise extortion and commit robbery; they oppress the poor and needy and ill-treat the alien, denying them justice." There is no need for us to read the entire Bible in order to discover that poor people are defined as those who do not have the wherewithal to live because their means of living has been snatched away from them. The ruling powers in the Bible seem frequently to be on the side of injustice, indeed, produce it. It is for this reason that Isaiah denounces them. "Your rulers are rebels, companions of thieves; they all love bribes and chase after gifts. They do not defend the cause of the fatherless; the widow's case does not come before them" (Isaiah 1:23).

CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS

Justice and peace are very concrete issues in the biblical tradition. We are to be co-workers with God in establishing the kingdom of God. The question which arises for us is whether the church in Africa colludes with injustice in our societies because we want to curry favour with princes and those who are in authority, or addresses the concrete realities of injustice meted out against our people: the underpaid, the industrial classes, the marginalized, the minorities, the women, the refugee and the nomad.

Some questions we might want to explore, then, are:
- What are the injustices in our own societies of which we are unaware or of which we are afraid to look at?
- Who are the exploited and marginalized in our societies?
- Is there a superficial peace in our societies and, at what cost is it maintained?
- Who suffers for the sake of a fragile peace?
- What is our calling as Reformed churches and how can we support each other in our work for justice and peace not only in South Africa but also in so-called post-colonial Africa?

I offer these as some thoughts for consideration.

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JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

Resource Materials 5.4

Readingroom

Library & Archives
World Council of Churches
150 Route de Ferney
CH-1211 Geneva 2
www.library.wcc-coe.org

JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

We live at a crucial moment in history, a time charaterized by intense polarization between the haves and the have-nots, extreme violation of human rights and a severe devastation of nature. The greed of some people has reached such heights that entire cultures are being silenced, entire forests devastated and entire waters in rivers and seas polluted beyond recovery in the pursuit of wealth and power - political, economic and social.

Hoever, when we look at the creation story in Genesis (Gen. 1:28-31) we find that God is the creator of everything. There existed complete harmony in nature. Then out of the dust of the earth God created man and woman (Gen. 2:7). In God's own image he created them and in giving them the entire creation, God gave them the responsibility of being true stewards of creation. He also reminded them that the fruits of his creation belong to all peoples.

But when we look at our broken communities today, at the degrading life-situations around us, when we hear the cry of millions for food and basic human needs, when we see the pain and agony of creation, can we say that we have lived up to our responsibilities?

This Bible study focusses on chapter 25 of the Book of Leviticus and attempts to initiate reflection on the Jubilee Year. For, we believe, that time has come for each nation and for all peoples of the world to take the year of the Jubilee seriously in order to assure peace and a life of joy for all.

The Year of Jubilee

God instituted the festival of the Year of the Jubilee as an extension of the sabbatical instruction. The Year of Jubilee was proclaimed as an announcement of liberty (Lev. 25:10) on the Day of Atonement following every forty-ninth year.

At this proclamation, as people observed the Atonement, the slaves were released, the debts cancelled, the land restored to its original owners and for the whole year all the fields were to be left fallow.

As such, the Jubilee served as an exercise of ordering relations in society in a just way, and of ensuring the care of the environment. It depicts the interdependence of human beings and between human beings and nature (v. 20). The Year of Jubilee also served as a valuator of all economic activity in the community. The value of all property was determined by the calendar as from the Year of the Jubilee. By introducing a kind of economic system where all property was in some form of a lease, it emphasized the fact that of all creation, the earth and its resources belong to God, and are only given to humankind for their stewardship and responsible use.

In Luke 4:18 we read that Jesus declared that he had come "to proclaim the Lord's year of favour / year of liberty / year of Jubilee."

The text: Leviticus 25

God is the Lord of all creation. God wants everyone to be free, and to be fully human.

In this chapter one finds God's commandments to his people:

Vs. 8 - 12: Proclamation of the year of Jubilee.
13 - 17: Jubilee as maintenance of economic justice.
18 - 24: Maintenance of the integrity of creation (land remaining fallow) linked with shalom.
25 - 28: Cancellation of debts.
35 - 38: Forbidding exploitation of the poor.
39 - 55: Emancipation and liberation of those in bondage.

Implications/Questions for Reflection

1. What are some of the injustices you see in your society and in the world at large?

2. What do you feel are some of the root causes of the situation of the majority of people in the world/in your country? (causes of landlessness, impoverishment, etc.)

3. What implications does the Jubilee (as in Leviticus) have on (a) your national economic order, (b) world economic order?

4. What are our responsibilities as stewards of God's creation?

Proposal for group work

Attempt to express the Jubilee Year in some art form: poem, drawing, song, etc.

JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

Resource Materials 5.5

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WHEN YOUR COUNTENANCE FALLS:
a study of Genesis 4:1-16

Wilhelmina J. Kalu

The story of Cain and Abel is a common one which often reminds people of a major stage in the spread of the domination of sin in people, that is, the advent of murder. Murder is a heinous crime which the world is battling to contain and to address in all its manifestations, including war, abortion, nuclear testing, capital punishment. Thus it can be highly distracting.

But there is another interesting and captivating aspect of this story, when "countenance falls" (Gen. 4:5). God has made it possible for us to have an inbuilt antennae sensitive to countenance changes. Even the tender infant shows distress and bursts into inconsolable wail at strange countenance of others. The God spirit in human beings is constantly at work and in this situation. When a countenance falls it is an obvious alarm that something is wrong, one is angry, displeased, unhappy, frustrated.

The falling countenance was as subtle at onset as the serpent did in appearance to tempt man (Gen. 3:1). This time the appearance did not take the form of a visible creature but an awareness on a spiritual realm. The falling countenance is something you feel, welling up in battle with your spirit, seeking to control and dominate you and promising you satisfaction and abatement if only you yield to it. God knew this ploy very well and was aware that Cain was not fully conversant with the dimensions of the experience. Like a little child, he was hurt, impatient, and had no intention of reflecting on what role he played in creating the unpleasant experience. God intervenes in his role as the father of the family, showing concern, gentleness. "Why are you angry and why has your countenance fallen?" (Gen. 4:6). He consoles and corrects Cain and his greedy nature and in verse 7 goes on to explain the consequences of yielding to the falling countenance: "sin is crouching at the door and its desire is for you, but you must master it". Can you/we today?

Interesting enough, there is no response from Cain. His reaction instead is to beckon Abel whom he directs to a destination - "the field", the open world, where hopefully Abel's voice will drown in the vastness, and where the vastness appears bigger than the two of them. Can God see, know or discern in the midst of an active vast environment? Cain, without allowing even an utterance: a question, a comment, an opinion from Abel,

let alone a dialogue between them, sheds innocent blood. Cain engages in complete destruction and annihilation of another creature, a human being bearing the image and spirit of the father God. Drastic repercussions reverberate through the environment, creation. What can be produced from a blood soaked, mine-strewn, war ravaged earth (Gen. 4:12)? His yielding to the impulse, decision of destruction to protect himself, solves his problem but did not give him satisfaction.

Thus ultimately he confesses "from thy face I shall be hidden" (Gen. 4:14). As usual, we have wonderful intelligent, evasive answers, theories and theologies. As a member of God's family he declares: I don't know where my brother is; I am not my brother's keeper! And now driven into wandering, a "fugitive" (by his own thinking processes) from the presence and loving shelter of God, he declares "Behold thou has driven" (Gen. 4:14). He turns around and blames God.

Everyday in the life of the human race the scenario of this simple story is replayed. The falling countenance is rationalised and given socially - acceptable, consolable names like: peace strategy, national security, individualised expression, operational definition, prioritised concern, democracy and so on. The force of anger is quietly unleashed on unsuspecting persons. We are brothers and sisters, yes, "but it depends on the definition. I don't know where you are and I am not your keeper". This is a very common retort. We are quick to point to our professions, cultures. When do we ever get the chance to define brotherliness and sisterhood? Outside a common father, the living God? When we set out human-type standards and reject God-type standards, we obviously run into trouble, and run around in circles of definitions until our selfishness, greed and wanton destruction catches up with us and, like Cain, we confess "hiding" from God's face.

Today, "the blood is crying from the ground" (Gen. 4:10) everywhere in the world, especially in Africa. Economic chaos and indebtedness to greedy nations, swarms of refugees, South African apartheid, are all results of decisions taken by selfish few, even in Christian circles, without consultation to the one father, the Living God. We have accepted our own standards (which of course change with time, whims and conventions) and kept God on the shelf, God's comforting simple, timeless advice, tenderness are flaunted. The oppressed cries but God says" Not so! If anyone slays Cain vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold!" (Gen. 4:14; Hosea 1:7). Away from "the presence of the Lord" we shall continue to dwell in the land of Nod (wandering) east of Eden.

<u>Questions and issues for consideration:</u>

1) Why are you "angry"? Are you prepared for its desire for you or can you consult Jesus earnestly before reacting? Is this latter option outmoded?
2) Are we supposed to take care of our brothers and sisters?

* * *

JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

Resource Materials 5.6

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GENESIS 38

TAMAR: A Critique of the Prostitution of the Monarchy

There are many ways to tell a story. The way we chose protagonists, establish the facts and the way we organize the plot are also part of the story we tell. Thus, to tell a story is to make history.

Violence against nature and domination over others (blacks, native peoples, women, poor, children, handicapped...) is a characteristic of stories told by the solidarity and absolute voice of men.

In the struggle for justice, peace and the environment, the women's movement raise their voice and tell a story. And, going back to history, they bring to light the history made by women.

The Bible reading being done by grass root communities and movements tries to listen to the many voices that exist in the biblical texts. For years many texts were silenced or underestimated.

Today those texts are popping up before our eyes demanding reflections and commitment. Thus, it is possible to tell the story of the Monarchy with its errors and alliances through the denounciation of the prophets or through the eyes of **Tamar**, a woman, prostitute, alien and a fighter?

The context of the Monarchy

The people of God live a situation of suffering. It is living under the oppression and mismanagement of the monarchic system. The monarchy brought for the people a new way of life based on the payment of royal taxes. These taxes were collected through the religious system (the temple), through forced labour (the corvee), and the intervention in the clan system by requisition of males for the army and females for housekeeping in the royal court.

In this situation people begin to remember and to tell stories of their origin, thus passing judgment on the roots of the monarchy and on the hegemonic tribe - the Tribe of Judah.

It is within this context that we will look at the story of Judah and Tamar. Judah is a man, the patriarch, the head of the clan. Tamar is a woman, alien, without rights. In order to clarify this conflict we will see, in details, who are the protagonists of this story.

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JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

Resource Materials 5.7

Tamar: a critique of the prostitution of the monarchy - 2 -

Knowing Judah

How does he relate to his family?

- He sells his brother (Gn 37:26-27)

-Deceives his father (Gn 37:31-35)

-Aparts himself from the clan (Gn 38:1)

How does he relate to his tradition?

-He marries a foreigner (Gn 38:2)

-Relates to a harlot (one devoted to prostitution in honor of idols (Gn 38:15)

-He gives to a prostitute as a pledge the objects which showed his identity (Gn 38:18)

How does he relate to the Law?

-Violates the rights of Tamar as a clan member (Gn 38:11)

-Tries to apply rigorously the adultery law when he learns Tamar is pregnant (Gn 38:24, Lv 20:10)

-He doesn't show the same eagerness to apply the law when he learns that he committed adultery with his daughter-in-law (Gn 38:25-26, Lv 20:12)

How does he relate to a woman?

-He uses her as an object as he gives her away to be spouse of one of his sons (Gn 38:6-9)

-He underestimates her as he tries to deceive her in her rights (Gn 38:11)

-He uses the woman as a object of pleasure, thus reinforcing a religious structure that exploits women (Gn 38:15).

JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

Resource Materials

BIBLE STUDIES
on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation
Resource Material Kit No. 5

Dear Friends,

Unfortunately, a mistake has slipped into the duplicating and numbering process of our resource material kit No. 5.

Please find enclosed the complete bible study that replaces Nos. 5.6 and 5.7.

We kindly request you to excuse our inadvertence.

Yours in Christ

Carlos Sintado
Executive Secretary
for Development Education

Geneva, 30 May, 1989

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JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

Resource Materials 5.6, 5.7

Tamar: a critique of the prostitution of the monarchy

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* He uses the woman as a object of pleasure, thus reinforcing a religious structure that exploit women (Gn 38:15)

Knowing Tamar

How does she relate to her family?

* At first she accept the established rules and accepts to marry her (Gn 38:6-7)

* She is used as a sexual object by her brother-in-law without respecting her right to bear a child, thus denying her full rights in the clan (Gn 38:8-9)

* She is obliged to return to her father's house, a a widow, while she waits for Judah to fulfill his promisse to marry her to his youngest son and to have a child (Gn 38:11)

How does she relate to tradition?

* She accepts the tradition of Judah's clan and fulfills all requirements (Gn 38:11)

* She becomes conscious that her rights, which would guarantee her live, respect and inherintance in the clan, are being violated (Gn 38:14b)

* She makes use of foreign costumes - prostitution in honor of idols - wich were formally prohibited by law in order to guarantee her rights (Gn 38:14)

* Without letting herself to be deceived once more by Judah, she demands to receive a pledge from Judah wich would give her conditions to continue fighting for her rights (Gn 38:16-18)

How does she relate to the Law?

* She un-masks Judah's opportunist legalism in the enforcement of the law (Gn 38:25)

* She fights for and makes sure that her rights, guaranteed by law, are respected even though she has to fight against a tradition which is characterized by prejudices and male supremacy, and she is not afraid of identifying herself with the marginalized (Gn 38:26)

Power from the perspective of woman

The text, from Tamar's perspective, is an ingenous critique done by a group of men and women of the monarchy and its practices of injustice, violent abuse of power and manipulation of the law, family structure, and tradition.

The text indicates that the homicide power struggle, a basic characteristic of the monarchy, is already taking place even in the womb of Tamar.

On the other hand, the story of Tamar represents the memory of resistence of the marginalized who search for an alternative organization in society which is based on participation, respect for people's rights and on Law that favors life.

This impels us today to evaluate our thinking about the Law, family and tradition taking people's struggles as a departure point, especially the questions posed by women's struggles to the wider discussion on **Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation.**

Nancy Cardoso Pereira

(CEBI - Ecumenical Center for Bible Studies)

Paulo Roberto Garcia

(CEDI - Ecumenical Center for Documentation and Information)

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JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

Resource Materials 5.8

John Vogelsang

GENESIS 38

1. Hear or read passage.

2. Small group discussion or private reflection: Who has power in the passage and what is the source of their power?

3. Summary of what others have said:
   Throughout the passage there is a tension between the letter of the law and the spirit of the law. To have a just society where everyone has a share of the land, the Israelite tribes developed the blood-line rule. Property stayed in a family as long as there were male heirs to continue the claim. If the husband of a woman died without a male heir, then it was the duty of his brothers to marry the woman and produce an heir. Though there were mandates calling for special care for widows and the poor, the best way that a woman had to guarantee her survival was through male children who could provide for her. Women were considered part of the property which passed from fathers to husbands to households of sons. To be a valuable piece of property the woman had to be pure.
   Judah has wronged Tamar. He has denied her the right of blood line and he has abandon her in contradiction to the call for special care for widows. Given the patriarchal society Judah has not done wrong by using a Temple prostitute; Tamar, however, has done wrong by playing the harlot and compromising the purity of the property she is which can be used in marriage arrangements with other patriarchs.
   Judah says, "She is more righteous than I." Tamar has risked going against the law to point out to Judah that he has broken the law. She breaks the law to be a witness to an injustice. Judah puts aside the law against harlotry in order to restore Tamar to her rightful place in society.

4. Hear or read the passage again, this time choose to be Tamar or Judah and experience the passage from their perspective.

5. What emerges for you when you look at the passage from Tamar or Judah's perspective?

6. What connections do you see between the passage, what you experienc and your current situation?

7. What actions are you as an individual and community called to?

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JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

Resource Materials 5.9

Horses and Idols Degrade People

Milton Schwantes

"Their land is filled with silver and gold:
and there is no end to their treasures.

Their land is filled with horses:
And there is no end to their chariots.

Their land is filled with idols,
they bow down to the work of their hands:
to what their own fingers have made.

So man is humbled,
and men are brought low."

(Isaiah 2:7-9)

"And lead us not into temptation!" Many temptations exist; their number is probably countless. But in any case, one in particular seems to me to be typical. We cultivate it in our churches. I refer to the temptation of wanting to practise our faith apart from our daily life; we imagine that we can find solutions to our religious problems without taking into consideration our human needs, our ills and joys, our work and our leisure. I speak about the temptation of trying to withdraw into the sanctuary of the heart in order to avoid facing daily realities. It is the illusion that we can be human without taking into account our historical context.

The prophets acted as bulwarks against this temptation. They did not hinder the Word's becoming flesh. We would need to practise trickery if we

wanted to deprive the prophetic word of its historical context. It would have to be falsified in a drastic way. If we take Amos as an example, we see that his prophetic message is directly related to reality. The two are interconnected. His work, inspired by God, is in defense of the poor. His prophetic experience takes place among the people.

The prophet Isaiah follows the same line of action, but his thrust is more specific. In comparison with Amos, we observe the following: Amos directs our attention to the process of exploitation; Isaiah focuses on the reality of plundered people. He is attentive to the "face of the poor" (Isaiah 3:15), to people "humbled" and "brought low" (2:9). He speaks about a "faint heart" (1:5). He denounces "pride" and "haughtiness" (2:12,17). This "arrogance" is also present in the "heart". But being "humbled" and "brought down" are not due solely to a "faint heart".

People are debased because "there is no end to their treasures". Isaiah's affirmation seems strange to us: people are destroyed because "the land is filled with gold and silver". Can this be so? People are ruined, yet there is an abundance of treasures! It seems like a joke! But this is our daily reality in Latin America.

Riches abound; the land is fertile and plentiful. Everywhere plants grow and animals thrive. People work harder than in other parts of the world. To all appearances there is an abundance of food. But misery prevails. "Man is humbled and brought down". Why such an incongruity? Why are so many people debased in the middle of endless treasures?

Isaiah says it is because "the land is filled with horses and chariots". It is because tanks and machine guns predominate. In your land, gold and silver are defended by guns. And that is what humiliates, ruins and destroys us.

In truth, Isaiah had no sympathy for horses and war chariots , and the generals had no sympathy for him. A person who proposes to turn "spears into pruning hooks" (Isaiah 2:4), cannot expect to have the military on his side. But it is arms which ensure that in a rich and blessed land there will always be broken and debased people.

As bad as they are, horses and tanks 'only' "trample on the head" (Amos 2:7), 'only' "break their bones in pieces" (Micah 3:3), 'only' "devour the poor in secret" (Habakkuk 3:14). But there is something that goes even deeper, down into the recesses of our being. It devours us from within, like termites, and the effect is only visible when everything is corroded and hollow. It has a degrading effect on people, and breaks up organizations.

This is idolatry. Idols are, in the opinion of Isaiah, more capable than generals. They do not leave visible marks. But they create within us so much confusion and disturbance that we can no longer see or hear. Idols humiliate us. They turn us into non-persons.

Idols are things. But they are things which seem to be alive. They seem to move and have a life of their own. Though they are nothing more than "the work of the hands" or that "which the fingers have made" they become the

center of our attention. They are brightly illuminated and decorated, and beautifully exposed in store windows and on supermarket shelves. They are protected by arms and security measures. They have all the technical assistance they need when they "sicken". They have a home, and would even have schools if they could learn to read and write. Everything for the idols! Everything for [consumer] goods! May they live! Because the people who produce these things with their hands and fingers are dying. They have no homes, schools or highways; they lack security and health.

And we bow down to these resplendent, brilliant, glittering and fantastic idols. We spare no effort to own them. They invade our dreams. We queue up in order to touch them. Let everything go to hell, what difference does it make! The important thing is that we have idols, things, goods!

Isaiah would say: This is what is killing you from within. This is what is destroying your soul. The horses step over you. The idols go through you. Both break you and crush you, and finally debase you. It behooves us therefore, to implore the God of the poor: "And lead us not into temptation".

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JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

Resource Materials 5.10

BIBLE STUDY OUTLINE ON "PEACE"

"Peace be with you" (John 20, 19-23)

1. The text and its context

Structure of the text		Contextual associations	
Disciples behind closed doors	fear of the Jews Jesus enclosed in the tomb	John 19	Gen 1/John darkness of the beginning light/life overcome by death/darkness order out of chaos; darkness could not overcome light
Jesus enters: (=breaks into closedness)	Peace be with you	open tomb	
Jesus shows the signs of his suffering/death		reality of cross/inseperable unity crucified/resurrected Christ	
	joy of the disc.		
Jesus sends his disciples out (=breaking down all closed doors)	"peace be with you"	"Exodus"/Being lifted up out of tomb/death	Light shines in the darkness
Jesus breaths on his disc.	gift of the spirit		God's breathing into Adam's nostrils: new creation; Reborn of God/children of God

2. The text and our context

- What changes are expressed by the text?

The text shows a transformation from closedness into openness, from fear to joy, from seperation to mission, stagnation to movement, from being attacked and defeated to becoming witnesses of peace, from death to life, light to darkness.....

- What does it mean that Jesus gives the peace greeting twice?

  Peace as gift to the disciples/peace as message to be spread - the peace of Jesus cannot stay with the individual only. They get peace (v. 19), and they are sent out with this peace (v. 21).

- What does it mean that Jesus together with the peace greeting shows the signs of his suffering/death? In which way belong peace and cross together?

  Jesus confronts disciples with the signs of his bodily, material, worldly suffering and death. His peace does not allow the disciples to escape into some kind of unworldly, "inner" peace. It is a peace of the suffering, out of suffering, in solidarity with the suffering which overcomes suffering. It is not a peace of strength at the expense of the weak ones (cf. PAX ROMANA).

- What does that mean in our context

  of a global superpower-confrontation at the expense of the small/3rd world countries and at the expense of nature/integrity of creation?

  of "Christian" justification of armament against "godless" empires?

  of local conflicts?

  of cooperation or confrontation of people of different religions and ideologies

  of a feeling of "peace and security" which just neglects the amount of global suffering and threat?

  of resignation because the forces of war/death seem to make a global holocaust inevitable?

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JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

Resource Materials 5.11

INTEGRITY OF CREATION

1. Read Genesis 1:31 and 2:15

2. Presentation of reality in contrast with the original intention

   a) jug of clear water vs jug of dirty water
   b) fresh branches vs sick/dead branches
   c) music interrupted by noise: guns, bombs, screaming, sirens
   d) fresh flowers vs broken stalks of oats and wheat in a poison can.
   e) beauty of creation vs a woman putting on make-up in a broken mirror. (Use any two or three of these possibilities according to what is available).

3. Read Isaiah 11:1-9
   (Let one person read it aloud and then each person reads it for him/herself
   Read alone and reflect. (2-3mins)
   Share with your neighbour (8 mins)

4. Plenary hearing some reactions and comments from the participants.

5. Plenary. Guided questions towards the understanding of the text.

   a) What are the key words and concepts in the text?

   b) How are these words and concepts interlinked?

   c) Looking at v 6-9
      How do you understand these verses -

      1. Literally a hope to be realized?
      2. symbolic, referring to the future state of peace and harmony?
      3. Eschatological hope for the new creation?
      4..Do you note any difference between v 6-8 and v 9?

d) What New Testament texts or themes do the images of this whole passage bring to mind?*

6. Group session

A) Are there signs of hope in your present situation pointing to the fulfilment of this prophecy?

B) What are the practical challenges to us as:
a. members of the church;
b. individuals within society
to be instruments to bring about the fulfilment of this hope?

Prepare statements of thanksgiving and commitment to be shared in the plenary as a closing exercise.

7. Plenary. Closing.

Each group shares its statements of thanksgiving and commitment as a closing prayer and worship.

* John 15, Ephesians 6, Luke 4, 1 Cor 12, Romans 12.

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JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

Resource Materials 5.12

MY NEIGHBOUR WHO WILL BE TWELVE IN THE YEAR 2000

Ecology is the science which deals with interrelationships: the relationship of plants to the surrounding inanimate world, of animals to plants and the environment, of human beings as - "special" animals - to each other, to other living things and the inanimate world. So, ecology permits the concept of "neighbour" to be given a meaning and dimension wider than the traditional ones. If the central point of the Christian message is love for one's neighbour, coming immediately after God in the scale of values (Luke 10, 27), we must now ask about the ways in which we can offend our neighbour, and how a modern, technological society faces up to the commandment "You shall not kill" (Ex 20,13). Our neighbour is not only the people near us: our actions, our individual and collective choices also involve a neighbour distant in space and time.

To give only a few examples. The ownership and use of motor cars are, by present standards, good things, in themselves praiseworthy. Indeed not to own or drive a private car appears an oddity, almost a betrayal of society's code of behaviour. Yet the noxious gases that issue from the car's exhaust poison, damage and impoverish a neighbour who is nevertheless there although we don't even see his face as we speed along the road.

Again, we are encouraged to use deodorants and furniture made of expanded plastic and to preserve food in a refrigerator, and all these benefits are obtained by using gases which lessen the concentration of ozone in the stratosphere and allow greater quantities of ultra-violet rays to reach the Earth, in the long run damaging the health of our own and future generations. So our present-day comforts compromise the health of a "neighbour in the future" whom we shall never know and cannot even imagine who he or she may be nor where they will live.

Pesticides, for the sake of immediate agricultural advantage - a good thing as providing food for our neighbour here and now - poison the water supply and food of a neighbour far removed, once released, the waste from military and "commercial" nuclear plants will with its radioactivity threaten for centuries the health of a neighbour whom we cannot even imagine, but who

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MY NEIGHBOUR WHO WILL BE TWELVE IN THE YEAR 2000

Ecology is the science which deals with interrelationships: the relationship of plants to the surrounding inanimate world, of animals to plants and the environment, of human beings as - "special" animals - to each other, to other living things and the inanimate world. So, ecology permits the concept of "neighbour" to be given a meaning and dimension wider than the traditional ones. If the central point of the Christian message is love for one's neighbour, coming immediately after God in the scale of values (Luke 10, 27), we must now ask about the ways in which we can offend our neighbour, and how a modern, technological society faces up to the commandment "You shall not kill" (Ex 20,13). Our neighbour is not only the people near us: our actions, our individual and collective choices also involve a neighbour distant in space and time.

To give only a few examples. The ownership and use of motor cars are, by present standards, good things, in themselves praiseworthy. Indeed not to own or drive a private car appears an oddity, almost a betrayal of society's code of behaviour. Yet the noxious gases that issue from the car's exhaust poison, damage and impoverish a neighbour who is nevertheless there although we don't even see his face as we speed along the road.

Again, we are encouraged to use deodorants and furniture made of expanded plastic and to preserve food in a refrigerator, and all these benefits are obtained by using gases which lessen the concentration of ozone in the stratosphere and allow greater quantities of ultra-violet rays to reach the Earth, in the long run damaging the health of our own and future generations. So our present-day comforts compromise the health of a "neighbour in the future" whom we shall never know and cannot even imagine who he or she may be nor where they will live.

Pesticides, for the sake of immediate agricultural advantage - a good thing as providing food for our neighbour here and now - poison the water supply and food of a neighbour far removed; once released, the waste from military and "commercial" nuclear plants will with its radioactivity threaten for centuries the health of a neighbour whom we cannot even imagine, but who

is doomed to be damaged by the legacy of our present-day consumerism and convenience. "You shall not kill" makes it incumbent on us to identify new forms of violence inherent in commodities and in manufacturing decisions, and in our own selfishness which makes us save money by not using filters and purifiers and makes us kill animals for unnecessary purposes. If we are concerned as Christians to examine ourselves about the ecological crisis we are living through, we must start from the question the lawyer puts to Jesus in Luke 10,29: "Who is my neighbour?" If Jesus were among us, if we thought about how he taught us, we should be enabled to find new types of "neighbours" to love in a technological society, above and beyond the pharisaical appeasement of conscience represented by the contribution of a little money to the poor or to the third world.

Offence to one's neighbour is seen also in the exploitation of the Earth's resources due to a population in excess of that which the planet's wealth can support. Just 20 years ago, in the time of Paul VI, there was an intense debate on demographic problems and on the limits of procreation, which led to the encyclical Humanae Vitae (25 July, 1968), in which Christian people were summoned to "responsible parenthood" as "a decision made for grave motives and with due respect for the moral law to avoid for the time being, or even for an indeterminate period, a new birth as a recognition of their own duties towards themselves, towards the family and towards society". Isn't the threat of planetary crisis a serious motive? Isn't avoiding it "a duty" to the family and society?

It is true that an inhabitant of the first or second world - the billion individuals who live in the advanced industrial countries, capitalist and socialist - consumes in a lifetime about fifty times more energy, water and food than an inhabitant of the fourth world, the poorest of the poor countries: another case of violence related to commodities. But even a redistribution in consumption would lead to a catastrophic death of natural resources, if the population continues to double every 30 or 40 years as it does today. If we are really concerned about the "neighbour of the future" we need the courage to accept that it is also necessary to slow down and stop the rate of population growth, and that, using lawful means, it is a good thing to encourage and promote responsible parenthood, and that is is a "sin of omission" not to promote this awareness among our contemporaries.

In order to make a call for responsible parenthood credible, it is also necesary to change our attitude to the countries - the "neighbour" - of the third and fourth worlds, the underdeveloped countries, no matter whether they are in a position to export petroleum, meat or timber or whether they are so poor that they can sell nothing except themselves. The wealth of us in the industrialized countries of the first and second worlds is based on the fact that we acquire minerals, sources or energy, timber, meat, cereals, rubber and oil-yielding seeds at low cost from poor countries. In this case the violence related to commodities can be seen not only in the "exploitation" of the neighbour's resources - can't we see here another aspect, legal and well regulated, of the breaking of the commandment in Exodus 20,15 "You shall not steal"? - but also in the fact that importing raw materials and goods for frivolous purposes - timber from the tropics, meat, rubber, furs etc. - leaves the poor exporting countries poorer and environmentally devastated.

I mention for instance only the trade in tropical timbers: in order to sell us these "precious" timbers (precious i.e. in respect of the price we pay for the finished products, not the price we pay the exporting countries for the raw material) the tropical countries are cutting down forests, causing the advance of deserts and the destruction of water supplies, contributing to the reduction of the tropical forests' capacity to purify the agents that affect the atmosphere. The increase of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, a source of calamity and trouble for our neighbour in the future, is accelerated by the destruction of the tropical forests brought about by our consumerism.

The fact is that today things run quite counter to the story in Luke 10,30-37. The priest and the levite were doing well, from their point of view, in hurrying to Jericho to fulfil their "duties", to earn for their families, without wasting time on the man beaten up by the thieves, just as we Christians of today do well to buy goods, supporting the consumer society which provides work, profits, investments and "progress". But in the surprising revolutionary logic of his message, Jesus praises the one who stops, the hated Samaritan, member of a detested people, he is the one who stops and is neighbour to the wounded man and has him cared for at his own expense.

If as Christians we say that we are concerned about the environment - i.e. this relationship with our neighbour through the Earth's resources, goods that belong to all (rather they belong to God, for the Earth is his, as Leviticus 25,23 reminds us) to "take care of" (Genesis 2,15) for "others", those who are to come - we have to question the principles of the society that calls itself "Christian".

To be sure, we could do it even out of base self-interest: if the injustice and violence in the use of nature's resources do not change, we shall be involved tomorrow, like today and yesterday, in recurring struggles for the control of raw materials. If we will not change for the sake of love of our neighbour and for peace as a good in itself, let us opt for justice if only to avoid trouble in future, as a cynical life assurance. "Opus iustitiae pax" (cf. RSV "the effect of righteousness will be peace"): the words of Isaiah 32,17 form the preamble, Jesus' words are the completion of the Christian's manual on this planet which ecology helps us to see in its proper dimensions and physical limits.

I do not intend to go into here - but it will be well to do so one day - how the laws of ecology give a marvellous contemporaneity to the message of Saint Francis, who recognises as sisters and brothers not only the neighbour represented by other human beings, but also other living beings, animals and even inanimate beings like fire and water and the "things" which have their part with us in the great plan of creation.

Giorgio Nebbia

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JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

Resource Materials 5.13

DAILY BIBLE READINGS ON JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION (JPIC)

The aim of this bible reading guide is to have the reader consider the Bible as a source of illumination and inspiration on the theme of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC). It is divided into three terms. Each month has a central topic to guide the reader. Each daily reading has a key text for more detailed reflection.

> "Yes, grass withers and flowers fade, but the word of God endures for ever". Is 40:8

Rev. Magda Aguirre

FIRST TERM: JUSTICE

January: The Justice of God in History

Reading			Key Texts
1	Gn	1:26-31	27, 28, 31
2	Gn	4:9-15	9
3	Gn	6:1-9	5-6
4	Gn	11:1-9	4-7
5	Ex	2:1-25	23-25
6	Ex	12:1-51	23-25
7	Ex	15:1-21	18
8	Lev	19:1-15	15
9	Lev	24:17-22	21-22
10	Deut	5:1-11	11
11	Deut	6:1-25	18
12	Judg	4:1-11	4-5
13	Ps	89:1-18	14
14	Is	11:1-9	4
15	Is	53:1-12	11
16	Mal	4:1-6	2
17	Mt	1:18-20	20
18	Mt	3:1-17	15
19	Mt	5:1-20	6, 20
20	Mk	2:1-17	17
21	LK	23:33-49	47
22	Jn	16:1-33	8-11
23	Rom	1:16-23	18
24	Rom	2:1-16	11-13
25	Rom	9:14-29	22-23
26	Gal	2:11-21	20-21
27	Col	1:1-16	15-16
28	Jas	5:1-6	6
29	I Pet	3:18-22	18
30	Rev	19:11-21	11
31	Rev	21: 1-8	3-4

February: Justice in Human Relations

Reading			Key Texts
1	Gn	2:18-25	24
2	Gn	20:1-18	6-7
3	Lev	19:10-18	18
4	Ruth	1:1-22	16-17
5	I Sam	2:1-10	7-8
6	2 Sam	12:1-25	7-10
7	I Kings	17:1-24	14-16
8	2 Kings	5:1-10	2-3
9	2Chron	9:1-12	8
10	Ps	10:1-18	16-18
11	Is	2:1-14	4
12	Ez	45:1-12	9-10
13	Amos	2:1-8	6
14	Amos	5:1-15	15
15	Mic	6:1-9	4
16	Mk	6:14-29	26
17	Lk	23:13-25	25
18	Jn	4:1-42	27
19	Jn	7:14-24	24
20	Rom	12:1-31	21
21	Phil	2:1-11	3-4
22	Col	4:1-6	1
23	Tit	1:1-9	7-8
24	I Pet	3:1-7	7
25	I Pet	3:8-12	8
26	I Jn	5:13-21	17
27	I Cor	13:1-13	13
28	Phil	4:10-20	12-13

March: Justice - Political and Economic Structures

Reading			Key Texts
1	Ex	21:1-11	10
2	Ex	22:1-15	9
3	Lev	19:9-14	10
4	Lev	25:1-31	23
5	Neh	12:1-8	1-3
6	Deut	14:22-29	29
7	Deut	15:1-18	2
8	Deut	26:1-12	10-11
9	Judg	20:1-29	19
10	Ps	15:1-5	5
11	Ps	82:1-8	4
12	Prov	16:8-32	8
13	Prov	22:1-16	16
14	Is	45:8-13	8
15	Is	50:1-11	8
16	Ezek	18:8-31	20
17	Amos	4:1-10	1
18	Mic	3:1-12	1,9
19	Mic	4:1-7	3-4
20	Mic	6:6-15	11
21	Mal	3:1-6	5
22	Mt	6:9-15	12
23	Mt	18:23-35	34-35
24	Mk	10:35-45	42-43
25	Lk	6:27-36	34-35
26	Lk	14:7-14	12-14
27	Acts	4:1-22	19
28	I Pet	2:11-17	15
29	I Pet	2:18-25	24
30	Rev	13:11-18	16-18
31	Rev	18:1-24	3-4

April: Justice - Religious Experiences

Reading			Key Texts
1	Gn	4:1-8	4-6
2	Gn	18:16-33	25
3	2 Sam	22:1-27	21
4	I Kings	18:20-40	37
5	Judg	2:1-13	10
6	Ps	51:1-19	4
7	II Chron	34:1-33	2,31
8	Ps	92:1-15	12
9	Is	26:1-10	9
10	Is	61:1-11	11
11	Jer	4:1-4	2
12	Ezek	18:1-9	5-9
13	Hab	3:1-19	17-19
14	Joel	2:18-32	28-29
15	Mal	3:7-12	10
16	Mt	6:19-34	33
17	Mt	11:1-19	19
18	Lk	1:39-56	53
19	Lk	2:39-52	40, 52
20	Lk	24:1-12	8-9
21	Jn	1:1-18	12,17
22	Jn	13:1-11	3-5
23	Acts	2:14-36	36
24	Acts	15:14-36	36
25	Gal	3:1-14	11
26	Gal	5:16-26	22
27	Eph	6:10-20	10
28	Heb	11:1-40	1
29	Jas	2:1-13	5-6
30	Rev	2:1-29	7,11, 17, 26

SECOND TERM: PEACE

May: Peace as the Fruit of Justice

Reading			Key Texts
1	Gn	15:12-18	14-15
2	Gn	31:1-16	14-16
3	Gn	41:1-36	34-36
4	Gn	43:16-34	23-28
5	Gn	49:1-33	5-7
6	Ex	3:7-12	7-8
7	Ex	18:13-27	23
8	Deut	20:1-14	10-14
9	Josh	9:1-21	20-21
10	I Sam	1:19-28	27-28
11	Ps	37:1-22	5-11
12	Ps	55:1-23	18
13	Ps	72:1-20	3
14	Ps	85:1-13	10-13
15	Ps	122:1-9	6-8
16	Prov	16:1-7	7
17	Is	9:1-7	6-7
18	Is	32:9-20	16-17
19	Is	48:1-22	18
20	Jer	29:1-32	5-14
21	Jer	33:1-15	3-7
22	Mt	5:1-12	9
23	Lk	1:67-80	79
24	Lk	7:36-50	50
25	Jn	16:1-33	33
26	Jn	20:1-23	19-21
27	Acts	10:24-43	36
28	Rom	5:1-11	1-2
29	Rom	14:1-23	19-21
30	Eph	2:11-22	14-18
31	I Pet	5:1-14	14

June: Peace - Between God and Human Beings

Reading			Key Texts
1	Gn	3:8-21	8-12
2	Gn	6:9-22	11-12
3	Gn	28:10-22	20-22
4	Gn	32:22-32	28-30
5	Ex	3:1-7	6
6	Num	6:1-27	26
7	Num	25:1-18	11-13
8	Judg	6:11-24	21-23
9	I Sam	1:1-18	17
10	Ps	28:1-9	3
11	Ps	34:1-22	14
12	Ps	119:161-168	165
13	Prov	3:1-12	1-4
14	Is	26:1-21	12
15	Is	38:1-18	16-17
16	Is	52:1-15	7
17	Lam	3:1-26	17-23
18	Dan	9:1-19	18-19
19	Mal	2:1-9	5-7
20	Mt	10:34-42	37-38
21	Mk	5:25-34	37-38
22	Mk	9:38-50	50
23	Lk	2:22-38	29
24	Lk	14:25-35	33
25	Lk	24:36-43	36
26	Jn	5:1-27	27
27	Rom	8:1-8	6
28	Phil	4:1-7	7
29	II Pet	3:14-18	14
30	Rev	1:1-8	4-5

June: Peace: Between God and Human Beings

Reading			Key Texts
1	Gn	3:8-21	8-12
2	Gn	6:9-22	11-12
3	Gn	28:10-22	20-22
4	Gn	32:22-32	28-30
5	Ex	3:1-7	6
6	Num	6:1-27	26
7	Num	25:1-18	11-13
8	Judg	6:11-24	21-23
9	I Sam	1:1-18	17
10	Ps	28:1-9	3
11	Ps	34:1-22	14
12	Ps	119:161-168	165
13	Prov	3:1-12	1-4
14	Is	26:1-21	12
15	Is	38:1-18	16-17
16	Is	52:1-15	7
17	Lam	3:1-26	17-23
18	Dan	9:1-19	18-19
19	Mal	2:1-9	5-7
20	Mt	10:34-42	37-38
21	Mk	5:25-34	37-38
22	Mk	9:38-50	50
23	Lk	2:22-38	29
24	Lk	14:25-35	33
25	Lk	24:36-43	36
26	Jn	5:1-27	27
27	Rom	8:1-8	6
28	Phil	4:1-7	7
29	II Pet	3:14-18	14
30	Rev	1:1-8	4-5

July: Peace in Human Relations

Reading			Key Texts
1	Gn	9:1-7	5-7
2	Gn	19:1-11	9
3	Gn	25:19-26	22-23
4	Gn	26:26-35	28-29
5	Gn	33:1-17	8-11
6	Gn	37:1-11	4
7	Ex	1:1-22	12-14
8	Ex	4:18-31	18-19
9	Ex	23:1-13	8
10	Deut	2:26-37	26-30
11	I Sam	21:1-22	13
12	2 Kings	4:1-7	7
13	Ps	120:1-7	7
14	Prov	3:13-35	17
15	Prov	17:1-28	17
16	Eccles	3:1-22	8
17	Jer	6:1-30	13-16
18	Mt	10:1-15	12-13
19	Lk	19:1-10	8-9
20	Acts	9:20-31	31
21	Rom	2:1-16	8-11
22	Rom	12:1-21	18
23	Rom	15:1-21	1-2
24	I Cor	7:1-15	15
25	I Cor	14:26-40	33
26	II Cor	13:1-14	11
27	Gal	5:16-26	22
28	Eph	4:1-16	1-3
29	I Pet	3:8-22	8-9
30	I Pet	4:12-19	12-13
31	II Pet	1:1-11	2-3

August: Peace in Creation

Reading			Key Texts
1	Gen	1:1-26;2:2	3
2	Gen	8:1-12	11
3	Gen	8:13-22	21-22
4	Gen	9:1-17	12-16
5	Lev	26:1-13	6
6	Deut	20:16-20	19
7	I Kings	19:9-18	11-13
8	Job	5:1-27	23
9	Ps	29:1-11	11
10	Ps	104:1-35	30-31
11	Ps	125:1-5	3-5
12	Ps	128:1-6	2
13	Ps	147:1-20	6
14	Ecl	12:1-8	1
15	Is	45:1-19	11-13
16	Jer	12:1-17	12
17	Jon	1:1-17	12
18	Jon	3:1-10	7-10
19	Mk	4:35-41	39
20	Lk	2:8-21	14
21	Lk	19:28-40	38
22	Acts	12:20-25	20
23	Acts	14:8-18	15-17
24	Rom	1:8-23	20
25	Rom	1:24-32	25
26	Rom	8:18-25	19-21
27	I Tim	4:1-5	4-5
28	I Tim	6:3-10	7-8
29	II Tim	2:14-26	22
30	Rev	5:1-13	13

THIRD TERM: THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

September: The Greatness of Creation

Reading			Key Texts
1	Deut	30:15-20	19-20
2	Job	28:1-36	24
3	Job	36:22-33	22
4	Ps	19:1-14	1
5	Ps	24:1-10	1
6	Ps	29:1-11	11
7	Ps	33:1-22	13
8	Ps	51-13	5
9	Ps	66:1-20	1-4
10	Ps	95:1-7	3-4
11	Ps	104:1-23	5
12	Ps	104:24-30	30
13	Ps	136:1-9	5
14	Ps	145:1-21	3
15	Ps	147:5-11	7-8
16	Ps	148:1-14	1
17	Eccles	3:10-15	14
18	Is	6:1-13	3
19	Is	40:22-28	22
20	Is	45:8-13	18
21	Is	55:8-13	9-11
22	Is	65:17-24	17
23	Is	66:1-24	1
24	Jer	31:27-35	35
25	Amos	4:12-13	13
26	Mt	6:25-34	33
27	Rom	1: 19-20	20
28	I Cor	8:1-13	5-6
29	I Cor	10:23-33	31
30	Rev	4:1-11	11

October: The Human Being in Creation

Reading			Key Texts
1	Gn	1:26-2:3	26
2	Gn	3:8-20	17-19
3	Ex	20:1-11	9-11
4	Ex	31:1-11	3-5
5	Ex	35:1-29	25-29
6	Deut	14:22-29	29
7	Deut	16:9-12	10-11
8	Deut	24:10-22	19-21
9	2 Chron	24:1-14	12-13
10	Job	34:10-30	12
11	Ps	1:1-6	6
12	Ps	8:1-9	3
13	Ps	46:1-11	10
14	Ps	63:1-11	6-7
15	Ps	77:1-20	11-12
16	Ps	90:1-12	1-2
17	Ps	146:1-10	5-7
18	Prov	24:23-34	27
19	Is	54:1-17	5
20	Is	60:1-22	21
21	Is	65:1-24	20-23
22	Jer	18:1-10	6
23	Mt	1:1-12	11
24	Mt	13:33-37	35
25	Lk	8:1-3	3
26	Jn	1:1-13	12
27	Acts	3:1-10	6
28	I Cor	12:1-11	11
29	II Cor	9:6-15	10
30	II Tim	1:1-18	7
31	Rev	2:1-7	2

November: The Hope of Creation

Reading			Key Texts
1	Deut	7:12-15	13
2	Ruth	2:8-23	17
3	Job	14:1-19	7-9
4	Ps	16:1-11	5-6
5	Ps	93:1-5	1
6	Is	35:1-10	1-2
7	Jer	14:1-8	7-8
8	Jer	31:1-26	12-13
9	Lam	5:1-22	21
10	Hos	6:1-3	3
11	Joel	3:1-21	16-18
12	Mt	28:1-10	5
13	Mk	8:1-10	8
14	Jn	6:22-40	27
15	Acts	24:10-23	14-15
16	Acts	27:9-44	34-35
17	Rom	1:18-23	20
18	Rom	8:19-24	19
19	I Cor	9:1-18	10
20	II Cor	3:1-11	9-11
21	Col	1:3-8	6
22	Col	1:13-20	19-20
23	Jas	3:1-12	7-9
24	Jas	5:7-11	7-8
25	Jas	5:12-20	15
26	IPet	4:7-11	7
27	I Pet	5:6-11	9
28	II Pet	3:1-7	5
29	Rev	19:1-5	1-2
30	Rev	21:9-27	23-24

December: The New Creation in Jesus Christ

Reading			Key Texts
1	Is	42:1-4	1
2	Is	53:1-12	11
3	Zech	9:9-10	9
4	Rom	5:1-11	1
5	Rom	15:7-13	3
6	I Cor	12:12-30	12
7	II Cor	1:3-11	3-4
8	II Cor	5:17-18	17
9	II Cor	10:1-18	17
10	Gal	5:1-12	5
11	Gal	6:11-16	15
12	Eph	1:15-23	17
13	Eph	2:11-20	13-14
14	Eph	4:1-16	15
15	Phil	1:12-26	19-21
16	Col	1:15-20	15
17	Col	1:24-29	28
18	I Thess	1:1-10	3
19	I Thess	4:3-18	14
20	Tit	3:1-19	14
21	Heb	3:1-19	14
22	Heb	7:11-28	17
23	I Pet	1:1-12	3-5
24	I Pet	2:1-10	9
25	Mt	1:18-25	23
26	Lk	4:16-30	18
27	Lk	9:18-27	24
28	Lk	22:14-23	19-20
29	Acts	1:1-11	7-8
30	I Jn	2:1-6	2
31	Rev	21: 1-27	5-6

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JUSTICE, PAIX, SAUVEGARDE DE LA CREATION

GERECHTIGKEIT, FRIEDEN UND DIE BEWAHRUNG DER SCHÖPFUNG

JUSTICIA, PAZ E INTEGRIDAD DE LA CREACIÓN

정의 평화 창조의 보전

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Convocati
Resource
Materials

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